157 On such soil and in such a climate, vegetation is reduced to some sparse, stunted trees, some angular bushes where thorny plants predominate. Upon the arrival of the rains, the land becomes covered in an incredibly short time with flowers and tall grasses. But during the other seven months, these plants wither and dry up (when the brush fires of the Indians do not do away with them completely) and the sand, white, red or ocher according to the region, appears in large
156 tracts under the charred branches. This is the time when the rare
157 small game which wanders across the plateau concentrates in the impenetrable groves (capões) whose rounded dome marks the presence of springs. There the animals find small pastures still green, usually bordering the narrow ribbon of forest which borders the rivers.

133 The courses of water are numerous and important, the two principal groups forming respectively the basins of the Juruena and of the Roosevelt. All the valleys are approximately parallel, and their waters flow toward the north. They cut the plateau by as many longitudinal ditches, and their course is cut up by cascades of rapids, sometimes also by waterfalls--for example, the falls of the Papagaio River at Utiarity, the falls of the Sacre River, and the rapids of the Juruena. These accidents correspond to the passage from sedimentary soil to crystalline rocks which reappear in the middle part of the Amazon basin. In their upper courses, owing to the nature of the terrain, the rivers have deep beds sometimes reaching a depth of some thirty meters. The water remains so transparent, however, that one can easily see the bottom and the fish which swim around. These conditions aggravate the food problem even more. The fish sees the fisherman through the crystal green and escapes him without fail. This is true especially concerning the branches of the Tapajos. When one reaches the lowlands of the valley of the Madeira, one does not only go from prairie to humid forest, the water courses [4] are also transformed, with the beds flat and muddy, and the waters a reddish color.

101 One can see that the frontiers of the territory occupied by the
131 Nambikwara correspond--roughly in the south and north, and almost exactly in the northwest--to the limits of the plateau. Toward the east, where the border follows closely the course of the Juruena, the Nambikwara border the Paressi and the Iranxe Indians who occupy the southern and eastern parts of the plateau.

161 It is impossible to estimate even approximately, the number of Nambikwara population since their territory remains to a large extent unknown. But it seems reasonable to assume that at the end of the construction of the telegraph line (around 1915-1920) this number must have been about five times more than at present. In postulating

721 Excitement and enthusiasm decline, and the group returns home.
But some are pushed until realized, [95] and can be very murderous.
726 The Nambikwara usually attack at dawn and extend their ambush by
dispersing throughout the bush. The signal for attack is given from
[534 place to place, thanks to the whistle which the Indians carry hanging
263] from their necks. This little whistle, composed of two bamboo tubes
[136] tied with cotton thread reproduces the cry of the cricket approximately,
and doubtless for that reason has the same name (kalõde) as this insect.

MAGIC, RITES AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

278 Some beliefs of a magical and religious character also play
[77] their role in social life. The most important is the notion of
nãnde (bi). To analyze it, we should first say a few words con-
cerning poisons. The Nambikwara are very expert poisoners. They
make curare for their arrows, or at least for some of them, pre-
[415] served in little earthen pots. (1) Without enlarging here upon the

1. The study of the Nambikwara curare was made, on the occasion of our expedition, by our friend and companion Dr. J. A. Vellard. Cf. Vellard, "A preparação do curare pelos Nambikwaras," Revista do Archivo Municipal de São Paulo, LIX, 1939, p. 5-16; "Communication à l'Académie de Médicine de Paris," id. LVIII, 1931, p. 117-118.

manufacture of the curare, it must be noted that this preparation, although reserved for chiefs and sorcerers, is not surrounded by any ritual and does not give rise to any magical operation. The Indians make the curare publicly, applying recipes and taking precautions which are either essential to the effectiveness of the product or which constitute simple prejudices, but all of which have a positive character. Their attitude towards this poison thus may be considered as scientific. Along with curare, the Nambikwara know other poisons likewise of vegetable origin, and which take the form of powders
[415] contained in small tubes. These are made of quills, feathers, or stalks of bamboo or other wood, cleaned out and corked at both ends with a piece of vegetable pith or cotton, and at times decorated with red dots and lines made with urucu paste. (2) These tubes are

2. Cf. Rondonia. Roquette Pinto collected examples of these tubes and reproduced one of them (Rondonia,

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134 The soil here is sandy and the rainfall insufficient
136 to support a forest. The vegetation consisted of
137 stunted piqui, mangabeira, frutа do lobo, lixeira, and other gnarled cerrado trees with the surface sparsely covered with bunches of wiry grass and other drought-resistant plants. During the whole day we saw only four deer and two rheas, which gives some idea of the poverty of the area. This
000 is public domain and apparently unwanted by stockmen owing to its poor soil and lack of water. By now we had left the telegraph line, which crosses unbridged rivers, and were winding around the headwaters of the streams. That night we camped at Sacuruina where two palm-leaf-covered sheds, left by "tropeiros," provided some shelter from the drizzling rain.

133 The following day the skies cleared and from the
137 tops of the folds in the plateau we obtained
312 magnificent views of the great plain. What few trees could be seen were no more than 5 or 6 feet high. A curious phenomenon seen along the plateau are the patches of forest of 5 to 10 acres in extent which appear to grow straight out of the semi-desert. Evidently ground water comes near the surface in these spots, permitting the growth of a genuine forest. Another interesting sight was the birth of rivers. In the shallow valleys formed by the folds, one could first see swampy ground, then tall grass, then bushes, then short trees, and finally the tall trees forming a "galeria" forest which bordered a river winding its way northward to form one of the headwaters of the Amazon system.

At 4 o'clock we arrived at the Sacre River where the trucks had to be ferried across on a raft. As this operation took until dark we camped for the night in some vacant buildings left by rubber workers. Before leaving next morning we visited the waterfall (Salto Bello) about 200 yards below the ferry where the Sacre River tumbles over a sheer drop of about 180 feet. Early in the afternoon we reached the Papagaio River and after ferrying the trucks across we were in Utiarity. Both the Sacre and the Papagaio are deep clear streams about 100 yards in width at the ferry crossings. These headwater streams are evidently fed by underground water, for their level does not vary appreciably during the year.

000 Utiarity, which was to be our base camp for the remainder of June and for July, is built on an

1 [on the Gerik
2 the Parecis.
- Analyst] [p. 83(b)]

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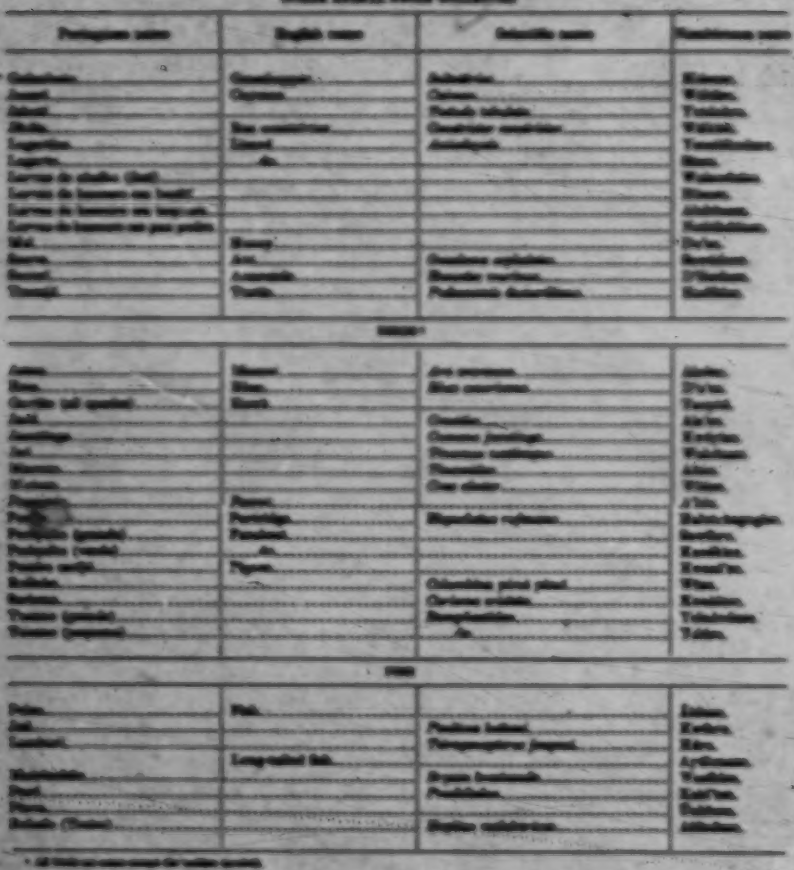

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